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Eller to discuss Piedmont Air history May 18

NEWTON-- Local author Richard Eller will present the history of Piedmont Airlines during a free talk at 5 p.m. Tuesday, May 18 at Catawba County Library in Newton.

The event is open to the public.

Piedmont Airlines was founded by Thomas Henry Davis in Winston-Salem, NC. Prior to deregulation, the airline provided jet service into relatively small airports and connected unlikely city pairs with jet flights. Examples of this include nonstop jet flights between Kinston, NC and Florence, SC and Lynchburg, VA, and New York City's LaGuardia Airport.

The Piedmont's fleet grew with the airline. Interestingly, one Boeing 727 that Piedmont purchased from Northwest Orient Airlines and placed into service was the aircraft that had been involved in the famous D. B. Cooper hijacking in the Pacific Northwest.

Piedmont still exists as a wholly owned subsidiary of US Airways, and flies out of many locations doing business as US Airways Express.

Eller, known to historians and history buffs around the region, researched and published the book in 2009 covering the beginnings of the company in Winston-Salem in 1948 up to the 1989 buyout by US Airways for a then-record sum. The book won the 2009 N.C. Society of Historians



Willie Parker Peace Award and inspired a just-released Hands-On History documentary for CVCC entitled *Speedbird: The History of Piedmont Airlines*.

Eller co-authored *The Tarheel Lincoln* in 2003 with Jerry Goodnight of Hickory. That book was discussed on CNN, in the *Chicago Tribune* and elsewhere.

Eller serves as Department Head of Social Sciences and is professor of history at Catawba Valley Community College. Prior to his appointment in 2002, he served as an adjunct history faculty member at Caldwell Community College and enjoyed a 15-year career as production manager at Prime Cable/Charter Communications in Hickory and previously worked in radio.

Eller holds a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is also a graduate of Caldwell Community College and Lenoir-Rhyne University. He is at work on a triple biography on Civil War Generals Joseph Hooker, Daniel Sickles and Daniel Butterfield.



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